



Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release

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Sequoia Celebrates National Wilderness Month and 120 Years as a National Park

This week, Sequoia National Park celebrates not only the 120th anniversary of its creation, but the declaration by President Barack Obama that September is National Wilderness Month.

Over 93% of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks is designated wilderness. The diversity and beauty of this land, ranging from 1,400' above sea level in the Sierra foothills to the summit of Mt. Whitney at 14,494', provides an invaluable recreation haven and natural refuge for the American people. Its wilderness areas, carrying the highest level of protection in the country, assure that these important natural areas will be protected and available for enjoyment for generations to come.

September marks a number of significant milestones for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and their wilderness lands:

- September 25, 1890 – Congress passes and President Benjamin Harrison (R) signs the act designating Sequoia National Park, making it the nation's second national park (Yellowstone was designated in 1872). This year, the park celebrates its 120th birthday.
- September 3, 1964 – Congress passes and President Lyndon B. Johnson (D) signs the Wilderness Act designating some nine million acres of public lands as wilderness and establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- September 28, 1984 – Congress passes and President Ronald Reagan (R) signs the California Wilderness Act designating the 723,036-acre Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness. (In the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 on March 30, 2009, an additional 39,740 acres were designated as the John Krebs Wilderness; in the same bill, 45,186 acres were designated as an addition to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness.)
- September 1, 2010 – President Barack Obama (D) proclaims September as National Wilderness Month and states, in part, the following:

“For centuries, the American spirit of exploration and discovery has led us to experience the majesty of our Nation's wilderness. From raging rivers to serene prairies, from mountain peaks slicing the skyline to forests teeming with life, our Nation's landscapes have provided wonder, inspiration, and strength to all

Americans. Many sites continue to hold historical, cultural, and religious significance for Indian tribes, the original stewards of this continent. We must continue to preserve and protect these scenic places and the life that inhabits them so they may be rediscovered and appreciated by generations to come.

As we celebrate America's abundance of diverse lands, remarkable wildlife, and untamed beauty during National Wilderness Month, we also look back on our rich history of conservation. It was over 100 years ago that President Theodore Roosevelt marveled at the stark grandeur of the Grand Canyon and declared, "the ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it." Since that time, administrations have worked across party lines to defend America's breathtaking natural sites. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act in 1964, and many Presidents have since added new places to this great network of protected lands so that millions of acres of forests, monuments, and parks will be preserved for our children and grandchildren.

This month, we renew our pledge to build upon the legacy of our forebears. Together, we must ensure that future generations can experience the tranquility and grandeur of America's natural places. As we resolve to meet this responsibility, let us also reflect on the ways in which our lives have been enriched by the gift of the American wilderness.

I invite all Americans to visit and enjoy our wilderness areas, to learn about their vast history, and to aid in the protection of our precious national treasures.

Designated wilderness differs from most land in the nation. According to the Wilderness Act, it is to be a place set aside where, "... in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape,...the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man." It retains "...its primeval character and influence...which is protected so as to preserve its natural conditions...." The goal is "to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

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